

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9813

C O N F I D E N T I H I L HELSINKI 681

LIMDIS

PASS TO UNDER SECRETARY SISCO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, FI

SUBJECT US VISIT OF PRESIDENT KEKKONEN

REF: 75 HELSINKI 2648

1. IT HAS BEEN MY CUSTOM TO TRY TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT KEKKONEN BEFORE AND/OR AFTER HIS OR MY ABSENCES FROM FINLAND. ON THIS OCCASION, JUST BEFORE DEPARTING ON APRIL 9 FOR CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TODAY TO CALL ON HIM FOR A VERY SPECIAL REASON.

2. I HAD THE PLEASURE TO INFORM PRESIDENT KEKKONEN THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA BOARD OF REGENTS HAD DECIDED TO BESTOW ON HIM THE FIRST EVER "REGENTS' DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AWARD" IN RECOGNITION OF HIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND. I ALSO CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT KEKKONEN THE HOPE OF THE REGENTS THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO VISIT MINNESOTA AND ACCEPT THIS AWARD.

3. PRESIDENT KEKKONEN WAS OBVIOUSLY MOVED AND GEN-
UNIELY PLEASED. HE SAID THAT FINLAND AND HE
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HAD TO ACCEPT THIS AWARD WITH HUMILITY, BUT APPRECIA-

TION FOR THE SPECIAL HONOR. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO ACCEPT THE AWARD AND EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE. HE THEN SAID THAT MOST CERTAINLY HE WOULD GO TO MINNESOTA TO RECEIVE THE AWARD, AND ADDED THAT HE HOPED THAT I WOULD ALSO BE PRESENT.

4. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT KEKKONEN HAS SEVERAL TIMES INDICATED A DEFINITE INTEREST IN AND WAS LEANING TOWARD A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES THIS SUMMER, HE HAD UP TO NOW NOT MADE A DEFINITE DECISION TO GO. PRESIDENT KEKKONEN ASKED ME ABOUT THE TIMING AND I TOLD HIM THAT THE U OF M WOULD PREFER TO HAVE IT TAKE PLACE AFTER JULY 17. HE SAID THIS WOULD SUIT HIM FINE. I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT THE CEREMONY MIGHT WELL BE A COMBINED UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY AFFAIR AND WOULD POSSIBLY BE HELD IN DULUTH, WHERE THE UNIVERSITY HAS A BRANCH AND WHERE THERE IS A LARGE CONCENTRATION OF FINNISH-AMERICANS. HE WAS AGREEABLE TO THIS SCENARIO.

5. I THEN TOLD PRESIDENT KEKKONEN THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD SENT A PERSONAL COMMUNICATION TO THE WHITE HOUSE RECOMMENDING THAT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN BE INVITED TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO WASHINGTON. I ADDED THAT I KNEW THAT PRESIDENT FORD WOULD LIKE TO MEET WITH HIM, AND THAT IT WAS NOW A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIME COULD BE WORKED OUT. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS UNFORTUNATELY NOT AN EASY MATTER, GIVEN THE SCHEDULING PROBLEMS IN A BICENTENNIAL AND ELECTION YEAR, AND WITH THE CONVENTIONS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SUMMER. I PROMISED PRESIDENT KEKKONEN THAT I WOULD LET HIM KNOW THE MOMENT I HAD ANY FURTHER WORD ON THIS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE. PRESIDENT KEKKONEN SAID THAT HE WAS VERY APPRECIATIVE OF THE EFFORTS BEING MADE FOR ARRANGING A VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND WOULD VERY MUCH WELCOME IT.

6. WE AGREED THAT I WILL INFORM THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA OF HIS ACCEPTANCE AND COMING TO RECEIVE THE AWARD. HE SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT AT THIS POINT THERE WAS NO NEED TO INFORM THE FINNISH EMBASSY IN
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WASHINGTON CONCERNING THE MINNESOTA VISIT. THE TIMING OF THE VISIT WILL HAVE TO AWAIT THE WORKING OUT OF THE REST OF HIS SCHEDULE, SUCH AS A TRIP TO HANCOCK, MICHIGAN, AND THE MONTREAL SUMMER OLYMPICS. I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WOULD ALSO PREFER TO WAIT FOR FINAL WORD ON A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT BEFORE NAILING DOWN HIS ITINERARY.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT A FAVORABLE DECISION
BE MADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ON THE RECOMMENDATION
THAT PRESIDENT FORD AGREE TO RECEIVE PRESIDENT
KEKKONEN DURING PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S TRIP TO NORTH
AMERICA THIS SUMMER.
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